THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The 100 KW MW transmitter located at Tiruchirapalli which was recently commissioned provides extended radio coverage to large areas of Coimbatore district. Besides, during the Seventh Plan (1985—90), a new radio station with 2x5 KW FM transmitter is proposed to be set up at Kodaikanal. This will provide Radio coverage to entire Coimbatore district.

Increase in the prices of essential commodities

298. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the prices of essential commodities have considerably increased during the last three months in comparison to the last year's;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof; and

(c) whether Government have taken any steps to bring down the prices of essential commodities in the country, if so, the details thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI D. L. BAITHA): (a) to (c) The All-Commodities Wholesale Price Index (WPI) moved up by 1.5 per cent during the three months period ending 15-10-1988, while it had moved up by 1.9 per cent during three months period ,between 18-7-87 and 17-10-87) last year. Trend in the wholesale price indices of selected essential commodities exhibited a mixed trend. The wholesale Price Index of some commodities have gone up while some have come down and a few have remained steady.

The rise in the prices of some of the essential commodities during the period is due to shortfall in production on account of severe drought in 1987 and its after effect in 1988, lean season and disruption in supplies on acount of floods and heavy rains in some areas. The Government have taken a number of measures to contain rise in the prices of essential commodities. The main thrust of the Government Policy has been to increase production of various essential commodities particularly those which are in short supply. To augment the domestic supply the Government has allowed import of some of the items like pulses, edible oils and sugar etc. and regulation on export of the essential commodities. Other measures taken to bring down the prices of essential commodities include strengthening of the Public Distribution System (PDS), opening of more Fair Price Shops, increased allocation of essential commodities and monitoring of the prices and availability of the essential commodities From time to time the Chief Ministers and Lt. Governors have been urged to enforce strictly the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act and similar other legislations against hoarders, black marketeers and anti-social elements. Distribution of selected essential commodities is also being effected through mobile vans in far flung hilly areas and remote areas.

Loss of cotton due to pests

299. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the estimated loss to the cotton growers of Andhra Pradesh following destruction of crops by pests during the last one year;

(b) the number of cotton growers who have committed suicide following